

# DIGICOM

The Newsletter of MAXPAK,  
The Midlands AX25 Packet Radio  
User Group

February / March 2009



## DC91

### In This Issue

Forthcoming Members Meetings	1
Chairman's Jottings.	2
Node / BBS Info	3
AGM Agenda	4
MaxPak Constitution	5
What is APRS - a reply by M0BPQ	6
MaxPak Who's who	8
MaxPak Lan	9

### Autumn / Winter DIARY.

Monthly Member's Meetings to be held at the pub  
"One Man and his Dog", Turnburry Road,  
Bloxwich WS3 3AU, just around the corner from  
the old qth, off the A34 ([MAP](#))

All meetings commence about 19.45 hrs in the  
Lounge Bar.

**2<sup>nd</sup> February Natter evening**

**2<sup>nd</sup> March Natter evening**

**6<sup>th</sup> April A.G.M.**

We hope you may be able to pay us a visit to one of  
our meetings.

## CHAIRMAN'S JOTTINGS

Greetings all and a Happy New Year!

The MaxPak local area network has undergone quite a transformation since the closure of our GB7WV node site at the Mander Centre, Wolverhampton in mid December 2008.

As reported in the last issue, the Committee took the decision to close GB7WV in the face of increasing site rental fees following the takeover of the Mander Centre by new owners last year. Myself, Miles, G4GSB and David G7BNK dismantled the system on Saturday 13th December. The process went very smoothly and we had it finished in a couple of hours. The equipment has been re distributed between myself, Miles and David for use on our respective systems. My thanks to both Miles and David for their help in this venture.

The WV22 Radio and TNC have been relocated to GB7WAL for successful testing of the path to GB7DBY and will very shortly be incorporated into the new GB7WS node, co-located with GB7WAL in Pelsall, when we change the TNC's over to Multidrop KISS operation.

Dave and myself have also installed a dedicated 23cms link between ourselves using equipment from GB7WV and this link will remove forwarding traffic between GB7MAX and GB7WAL from 432.675 user frequency once the Multidrop KISS system is fully operational at GB7WAL, which we hope to complete within the next fortnight or so.

Over the Christmas Holiday, I'm delighted to report that GB7PMB is once again back on air from its Newport, Shropshire QTH with 1K2 Baud radio access available on 144.950 MHz and Telnet access via the Internet available. Please contact myself (contact details on back page) if you'd like to use GB7PMB as your Home BBS and require setting up for either radio access or Telnet access or both if you wish!

Miles, G4GSB reports that the Dudley Node, GB7DN is functioning well and he hopes to experiment with some other links on 70/23cms over to GB7DBY in Derby once the better spring weather arrives! Watch this space! We also plan to test linking between BLOX and DUDLEY using split frequency 70cms 9K6 very soon. We also hope to get a 70cm 9K6 link between Dudley and Corley.

Finally, as Easter approaches, we think one again about the 2009 AGM to be held on Monday 6th April 2009. Please book this important date in your diary as it's YOUR chance to have a say in what MaxPak does in 2009.

All committee positions will be up for election so if you fancy any of these, please contact Miles G4GSB, our Secretary (contact details on back page) or myself. 73's until the next issue.

Chris Roberts G0CNG, Chairman 2008-09.

[www.maxpak.org.uk](http://www.maxpak.org.uk)

# Node/BBS News

Correct 1<sup>st</sup> February 2009

## GB7MAX /BLOX Node (Bloxwich)

The BBS/Node, using WinFBB/ XROUTER continues to perform satisfactorily. Direct Telnet access to the BBS on Port 4001 and to the BLOX node on Port 2323 is available.

Contact Chris, G0CNG, sysop, for further information or access password authorisation.

Current R.F. user access to both BLOX and GB7MAX is as follows:

**2m 144.9375 MHz 1K2**  
**70cm 432.675 MHz 1K2**

## GB7WAL (Walsall)

This BBS continues to perform satisfactorily. (See chairman's jottings) User ports as follows:

**2m 144.850 1K2**  
**2m 144.975 9K6**  
**70cm 432.650 1K2**

## DUDLEY GB7DN (XROUTER) NODE (Dudley)

Sited at the QTH of our Secretary, G4GSB in Dudley. User access is as follows:

**2 m 144.850 MHz 1k2**  
**70 cm 432.675 MHz 1k2**  
**(Other ports back soon after Node/Antenna rewire/rebuild)**

## GB7PMB and SALOP G7BUG-8 NODE (Newport, Shropshire)

Sited at the QTH of Tony, G7BUG.

Good signal reports have been received around Newport and Wellington areas.

Direct Telnet access available, contact G0CNG.

R.F. user access as follows:

**2m 144.950 1K2**

**MAXPAK AGM AGENDA 2009**  
**TO BE HELD AT**

**“One Man and his Dog”**

**APRIL 6<sup>TH</sup> AT 20:00**

1. MINUTES OF THE LAST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
2. MATTERS ARISING
3. CHAIRMANS REPORT
4. PRESENTATION OF ANNUAL ACCOUNTS
5. SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR THE FORTHCOMING YEAR
6. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN
7. ELECTION OF SECRETARY
8. ELECTION OF TREASURER AND MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY
9. ELECTION OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS
10. A.O.B

If you would like the committee to consider any additions to the agenda,  
please contact Miles G4GSB,

(packet) [G4GSB@GB7MAX](mailto:G4GSB@GB7MAX),

(E-mail) [g4gsb@btinternet.com](mailto:g4gsb@btinternet.com),

or 07703 338752

# MAXPAK CONSTITUTION

## Preliminaries

1. The name of the group shall be "MAXPAK".
2. Meetings shall be held not less than once per year.
3. The group's year shall be the 1<sup>st</sup> April to the 31<sup>st</sup> March.
4. The group's aims shall be to foster and encourage the use of AX-25 packet radio in the Midlands, and to liaise with other groups of like minds in other areas.

## Membership

5. Membership shall be open to all, at the discretion of the committee, and on payment of a subscription.
6. The committee may at their discretion, waive the requirement for payment of the subscription, if in their opinion it would be in the interests of the group to do so.
7. Any member who has payment of his subscription waived shall not be entitled to vote at any Annual General Meeting or Extraordinary General Meeting.

## Committee

8. The group shall be run by a committee, which shall comprise: - Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, and not less than two ordinary members of the group.
9. The committee shall serve until the next Annual General Meeting.
10. The Chairman shall preside over all meetings of the group.
11. In the event of him not being present, a committee member may be deputed by those members present to preside.

## Accounts

12. The Treasurer shall be responsible for the financial affairs of the group and shall maintain such records and books as may be required.
13. The Treasurer shall, upon the request of any member of the committee, provide within reasonable time a written statement of account.

## Secretary

14. The Secretary shall record all decisions made at committee and general meetings.
15. In his absence, a member may be deputed for the meeting.

## Meetings

16. The Annual General Meeting shall be held, as soon after the group's year-end as possible, and not later than the 30<sup>th</sup> May, to elect a new committee, receive the accounts, and any other business.
17. The new committee shall commence duties at the end of the meeting.
18. The Committee shall notify each member in writing or by (internet) e-mail by sending the notification to the postal or e-mail address held by the Membership

Secretary at least 21 days prior to the date fixed for the Annual General Meeting.

19. Any member may request a specific matter be included in the agenda by written notification to the Secretary.
20. Any officer or member may request an Extraordinary General Meeting by writing to the Secretary.
21. Any such request must be supported by at least 4 ordinary members.
22. The committee shall, on receipt of a properly constituted request, notify each member in writing or by (internet) e-mail by sending the notification to the postal or e-mail address held by the Membership Secretary at least 21 days prior to the date fixed for holding the Extraordinary General Meeting, and the meeting may not discuss any other business.

## Subscriptions & Resignations

23. The annual rate of subscription shall be determined at the Annual General Meeting.
24. Membership shall last for a period of 12 calendar months, commencing the date the subscription is received and accepted by the membership secretary on behalf of the committee.
25. Further subscriptions shall be due on each and every anniversary thereafter.
26. Membership shall be deemed to have lapsed if payment has not been received within 30 days of the due date.
27. A member may resign at any time, by informing the membership secretary in writing, but no refund of subscription shall be made unless in the opinion of the committee it would be fair so to do.

## Dissolution

28. In the event of the group being wound up by a decision of the membership at either an Annual General Meeting or Extraordinary General Meeting, two independent trustees shall be appointed to supervise the execution of all debts of the group and the distribution of all assets of the group.
29. All assets shall be disposed of to a registered charity. The charity shall be determined by the members at the said meeting.

## Changes to the Constitution

30. No alteration shall be made to this constitution without the holding of an Annual General Meeting or an Extraordinary General Meeting.
31. A vote in favour shall be indicated by a majority of at least two-thirds (2/3rds) of the total paid-up membership in attendance, including postal votes.
32. A quorum shall be a minimum of 15 paid-up members in attendance.

Last revised  
2001.

2<sup>nd</sup> April

## **What is APRS? By Steve Bunting, MOBPO.**

Miles posed an interesting question in the last issue of Digicom, what use is APRS? I think I can provide the answer - APRS is designed to be a real time information system that everyone can use on a single frequency. This is very different from BBS based packet radio which is excellent at storing and forwarding messages, but not suitable for time critical applications. But what are these time critical applications?

The most popular application is vehicle tracking. Mobile stations attach a GPS to their TNC and radio which reports their position either at predetermined periods or proportionally depending on speed and direction (see smart beaconing in ref 1). The data is contained within a single packet burst which is relayed via the RF network and possibly to the Internet. This can be useful in RAYNET style emergency situations or public service events (ref 2) as well as for those who want to advertise their current location to local amateurs or perhaps even friends and family on the web (ref 3). MB7UV has provided a cornerstone to the West Midlands APRS network as it provides good coverage of the M6 and following its closure it will be sorely missed by both resident users and those passing through.

There is however, much more to APRS than “dumb” tracking. APRS has the ability to pass objects as well as positions. These can include the location, frequency and shift of the local repeater so that non locals can find someone to talk to (ref 4), the location of traffic jams or to guide people to the local club meeting or ham radio dealer. I could go on but I am sure you get the drift.

A further application is short (SMS style) messaging. As Miles points out the unconnected protocol means that messaging over a large number of hops in an unconnected network is unreliable in the UK as the network is not that well developed, but within the local area the SMS style is very effective. If your RF station is within a hop or so of a fully functional APRS internet gateway (I-gate), you can gate via the web to make up for a lack of RF infrastructure or gate short messages to an email address if the I-gate is using the right software.

The Internet has proved a mixed blessing for APRS as with the rest of amateur radio. I-gates allow for holes in the RF network to be bridged, but conversely there are some who only beacon their position via the Internet, which seems rather perverse to me.

Perhaps this explains some of the odd behaviour that Miles reported where things are seen on screen but not heard on RF.

APRS is very popular in the U.S., driven by the emergency preparedness agenda. As a result, there are several inexpensive “APRS only” (in effect

KISS) TNCs and dumb trackers (e.g. ref 5, 6 and 7) that can enable you get on the air relatively easily without dedicating a PC to the job. New firmware for existing TNC-2 clones is also available to make them 100% APRS compatible (ref 8). There are even TNCs that interface with consumer Satnavs to allow a non-PC based GUI (ref 5). Similarly, a recent German development allows APRS sysops to host an I-gate without a PC by flashing a commonly available network router with Linux and some bespoke software (ref 9) which means that an I-gate and digipeater consumes much less electricity than leaving a PC running 24/7. I now run one of these 24/7 at MB7UBP. This move back towards TNC kits and equipment modification harks back to earlier days of packet radio and, for me, the spirit of amateur radio.

However, a bright idea in amateur radio is nothing without a critical mass of users and in packet radio this requires a local network of some sort. This is especially true in APRS with its real time objectives. Certain areas of the UK have managed to build up a fan base of regular users by snaring inquisitive hams who have downloaded UIVIEW or similar to see how it works and the provision of a local network provided by a few stalwarts gave them something to interact with so they came back to use it over again. The south coast, East Anglia and Manchester are all good examples of activity based around a few well sited digis and an I-gate. As a result I hope that Maxpak's new home for GB7WV also includes a space for MB7UV providing potential APRS users a base for further experimentation. There are already a couple of I-gates in the west midlands which UV could link into, but as with all packet infrastructures these days a new one wouldn't hurt!

If readers would like any further explanation of any of the above I am happy to correspond by email. I am available at [steve at mycallsign dot com](mailto:steve@mycallsign.com).

Ref 1: <http://www.hamhud.net/hh2/smartbeacon.html>

Ref 2: <http://www.stuckinthemud.org/downloads/Mull%202007%20APRS%20Report%20-%20G1HUL.pdf>

Ref 3: <http://APRS.fi>

Ref 4: <http://aprs.org/localinfo.html>

Ref 5: <http://www.argentdata.com/>

Ref 6: <http://www.argentdata.com/>

Ref 7: <http://www.tnc-x.com/>

Ref 8: <http://www.ir3ip.net/iw3fqg/uidigi-e.htm>

Ref 9: <http://www.aprs4r.org/cgi-bin/trac.cgi/wiki/WikiStart>

**G4GSB replies;** An excellent article thank you Steve.

With regards MB7UV, we hope to have it back on the air at my qth by mid February, until a better and more permanent location can be found.

If anyone knows of a suitable site, please let us know.

On a personal level, I will give aprs another try - after reading all the articles in the above links.

## **2008 - 2009 COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

### **Chairman and Membership Secretary**

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Miles G4GSB / Dave M0DCM

Details as above

[www.maxpak.org.uk](http://www.maxpak.org.uk)

# The MaxPak Local Area AX25 Network; February 2009

1K2 user ports in yellow, 9K6 users ports in brown

